

# SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL ANNOUNCES FIRST FILMS FOR 2014

The 61st Sydney Film Festival today announced 32 films to be featured in this year's event in advance of the full program launch on Wednesday 7 May.

"We are pleased to present this sneak preview of 32 of the 180-plus films in this year's program," said Festival Director Nashen Moodley. "We have gathered a selection of the best films from the best film festivals and filmmakers around the world and across Australia. Together this will give you a multi-faceted look at the state of our world right now – our interests, our fears, our hopes and dreams."

The Sydney Film Festival expands its geographical footprint west to Blacktown this year with a special 40th anniversary restoration of the cult classic *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* on Friday the 13th of June at the Skyline Drive-In.

In addition, SFF will return to the State Theatre, Event Cinemas George Street, Dendy Opera Quays, Art Gallery of NSW, the popular Festival Hub at Town Hall and, for the second year, to the much-loved Hayden Orpheum Picture Palace in Cremorne.

This first announcement comprises 32 titles including one World Premiere, 19 Australian premieres, 13 features, 11 documentaries and a special eight-film retrospective on maverick American filmmaker Robert Altman, with his son and filmmaker Michael Altman attending the Festival as one of our many special guests. Michael Altman is a highlight of our extensive talks program (announced in full in May), and will introduce several of our Altman screenings.

Today's announcement includes insights into the minds of three of the most powerful political and philosophical figures of our age, with the enlightening documentaries *Is The Man Who Is Tall Happy?*, in which director Michel Gondry (*Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*) interviews Noam Chomsky; *The Unknown Known*, in which director Errol Morris (*The Fog of War*) interviews Donald Rumsfeld; and *Nelson Mandela: The Myth and Me*, about Mandela's contested legacy.

This sneak peek also invites you on some out-there adventures: on a pop comedy road trip with *Frank* starring Michael Fassbender as a masked musical genius, also starring Maggie Gyllenhall and Domhnall Gleeson; to the Ukraine with topless feminist sensation *FEMEN in Ukraine Is Not Brothel*; and on a reunion concert tour of Sheffield with Jarvis Cocker and his Brit-rock band *Pulp* in the music doco of the same name.

From cutting-edge physics at its sexiest in *Particle Fever* to the utterly delightful story of three Swedish teenage girls who want to form a punk band in *We Are The Best!*, this selection is just a sample of what you can expect from the 180-plus films from roughly 50 countries that will appear in the 2014 Sydney Film Festival.

The program also includes some of this year's biggest independent film hits, including Indian love story *The Lunchbox* starring Irrfan Khan, and the Chinese noir thriller *Black Coal, Thin Ice*, which won the Golden Bear for best film at the 2014 Berlinale.

In addition, SFF 2014 will feature a specially curated photographic exhibition called *Rosebud* by Los Angeles-based Australian photographer Hugh Hamilton. Presented in association with *Head On Photo Festival* with support from *Arthead*, *Rosebud* presents a series of striking and intimate portraits of film stars and filmmakers taken with their 'rosebud' – a personal object of particular significance to their life and work, a concept inspired by the classic film *Citizen Kane*.

The full Sydney Film Festival program is announced on Wednesday 7 May at 10am.

Note: Flexipasses and subscriptions to Sydney Film Festival 2014 are on sale now. Please call 1300 733 733 or visit [sff.org.au/preview](http://sff.org.au/preview) for more information.

Full synopsis of all 32 films (in alphabetical order)

## FEATURES

### BLACK COAL, THIN ICE

Director: Yinan Diao | Hong Kong, China | 106 mins | In Mandarin with English subtitles

Winner of the Golden Bear at this year's Berlinale, this stylish and exhilarating film noir is set in industrial northern China. The story follows a police investigation that ends in tatters when officers are killed and wounded while arresting suspects. Forced to retire, injured officer Zhang takes up the trace years later when similar murders come to light and a beautiful and mysterious woman enters the picture.

### COLD IN JULY

Director: Jim Mickle | USA | 109 mins | In English

Michael C. Hall (*Dexter*), Sam Shepard and Don Johnson (*Miami Vice*) are an unlikely Texan trio in this nasty and funny pulp thriller. After killing a home intruder, Richard (Hall) becomes a reluctant hero. When the dead man's father (Shepard) stalks his family, things take an unexpected turn. Enter wisecracking PI Jim Bob (Johnson), and the three go on to uncover a grisly secret.

## FRANK

Director: Lenny Abrahamson | Ireland, UK | 93 mins | In English

Michael Fassbender, Domhnall Gleeson and Maggie Gyllenhaal star in a hip, hilarious and sometimes dark comedy from Irish director Lenny Abrahamson (*What Richard Did*, SFF 2013; *Garage*). Fassbender always wears a bizarre giant fake head as the enigmatic lead singer of an ambitious indie-pop group. He and his bandmates go from an excruciatingly long recording session to facing the pitfalls of fame at SXSW.

## GABRIELLE

Director: Louise Archambault | Canada | 104 mins | In French with English subtitles

In this uplifting tale from the producers of SFF 2012 Audience Award winner *Monsieur Lazhar*, a musically gifted young woman with intellectual disability falls in love, only to discover her family has concerns. Can she handle an adult sexual relationship? Radiant newcomer Gabrielle Marion-Rivard (in a semi-autobiographical role) won the Canadian Screen Award for Best Actress.

## GOD HELP THE GIRL

Director: Stuart Murdoch | UK | 111 mins | In English

Directed by and featuring music from Belle and Sebastian's Stuart Murdoch, this is a warm coming-of-age story turned indie-pop musical. Troubled yet fantastical dreamer Eve (played by Emily Browning), sensitive musician James (Olly Alexander) and posh Cass (Hannah Murray) sing and dance their way through the streets of Glasgow during what is bound to be the most idyllic summer of their lives.

## JOE

Director: David Gordon Green | USA | 117 mins | In English

Nicolas Cage delivers a remarkable performance as a hard-drinking tough guy with a violent past in this Southern Gothic drama from David Gordon Green (*Prince Avalanche*, SFF 2013; *Pineapple Express*). When he meets 15-year-old Gary (Tye Sheridan), who suffers under an abusive alcoholic father, Joe takes the enterprising young man under his wing, and together they navigate a difficult world in search for redemption.

## KILLERS

Directors: The Mo Brothers | Japan, Indonesia | 137 mins | In Japanese and Indonesian with English subtitles

From cult-hero co-directors the Mo Brothers (*Macabre*): A Tokyo serial killer uploads footage of his grisly deeds to a secret website. When a Jakarta journalist stumbles across the videos, he decides to follow suit and administer his own form of filmed justice. When the seasoned psycho and the copycat meet, the stage is set for intense psychological drama.

## LOVE IS STRANGE

Director: Ira Sachs | USA | 98 mins | In English

John Lithgow and Alfred Molina are magnificent in this topical and tender romance. After 39 years together, Ben and George are wed in New York under new marriage laws. Soon after, George is fired from his teaching job at a Catholic school; and the pair are forced to give up their comfortable lives. The great supporting cast includes Marisa Tomei.

## THE LUNCHBOX

Director: Ritesh Batra | India, France, Germany | 104 mins | In Hindi with English subtitles

Irrfan Khan (*Life of Pi*, *Slumdog Millionaire*) stars in this Indian indie hit – a delicious celebration of romance and food. In Mumbai's remarkable dabba (lunchbox) delivery system, only one in four million home-cooked meals is ever lost. That one wayward lunch connects a housewife with an office worker in the dusk of his life, leading them into a rich fantasy.

## OMAR

Director: Hany Abu-Assad | Palestine | 98 mins | In Arabic and Hebrew with English subtitles

The latest Oscar-nominated drama from Palestinian director Hany Abu-Assad (*Paradise Now*, SFF 2005) is a high-impact thriller tinged with political consciousness and imbued with romance and tragedy. A young Palestinian resistance fighter is arrested and blackmailed by Israeli secret police, but attempts to double-cross them in a desperate bid for love and freedom.

## RUIN

Directors: Michael Cody, Amiel Courtin-Wilson | Australia | 90 mins | In Khmer and English with English subtitles

In the stunning follow-up to *Hail* (SFF 2011), Australian filmmakers Michael Cody and Amiel Courtin-Wilson deliver a visually breathtaking, impressionistic tale of love and brutality. Phirun and Sovanna are magnetically drawn together when forced to flee the city and take to the jungle. Along with growing love, they face burgeoning chaos.

## THE TEXAS CHAIN SAW MASSACRE

Director: Tobe Hooper | USA | 83 mins | In English

Forty years after it was released to high acclaim and hysterical outrage, now superbly restored, Tobe Hooper's classic is a superior slasher film – and much more. With very little explicit violence, this tale of five young friends who encounter a family of cannibal psychopaths remains one of the most notorious, influential and terrifying motion pictures ever made.

## TOM AT THE FARM

Director: Xavier Dolan | Canada, France | 102 mins | In French with English subtitles

Xavier Dolan, the young Canadian who won the 2010 Sydney Film Prize at the age of 21 for *Heartbeats*, directed and stars in this tense and complex

Hitchcockian psychological thriller. A young man attends the funeral of his gay lover in rural Quebec, only to find himself trapped in a dangerous dance of lust and sadistic impulses with the deceased's brother.

#### WE ARE THE BEST!

Director: Lukas Moodysson | Sweden, Denmark | 102 mins | In Swedish with English subtitles

Lukas Moodysson (Together; Lilya 4-Ever; Show Me Love, SFF 2009) returns with a boisterous, feel-good film about three 13-year old girls in early '80s Stockholm who are determined to start up a punk band despite their considerable absence of musical ability. Sweet, humane and wonderfully energetic, We Are the Best! will inspire young and old alike.

#### DOCUMENTARIES

##### E-TEAM

Directors: Katy Chevigny, Ross Kauffman | USA | 89 mins | In English, French, German, Russian and Arabic with English Subtitles

In the midst of humanitarian crises, Human Rights Watch sends in specially trained investigators armed only with laptops and mobiles – the E-Team. They painstakingly interview witnesses to atrocities, often under perilous circumstances, determined to capture their stories before they are suppressed. This documentary skilfully captures their commitment and profound humanity.

##### IS THE MAN WHO IS TALL HAPPY?

Director: Michel Gondry | France | 88 mins | In English

In this filmed conversation, French cinematic visionary Michel Gondry (Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind) meets 'the most important thinker alive' – philosopher, linguist and activist Noam Chomsky. Featuring brightly coloured, hand-drawn animation to illustrate Chomsky's personal life and ideas, and crafted with verve, it's both a visual and cerebral pleasure.

##### NELSON MANDELA: THE MYTH AND ME

Director: Khalo Matabane | Germany, South Africa | 84 mins | In English, Dutch and Afrikaans with English subtitles

Nelson Mandela remains an international icon of peace. In his personal letter to Mandela – augmented by interviews with the Dalai Lama, Ariel Dorfman, Tariq Ali, Henry Kissinger and others – director Matabane confronts his childhood hero with the difficult question of whether Mandela went too far in his policy of forgiveness and reconciliation.

##### PARTICLE FEVER

Director: Mark Levinson | USA | 97 mins | In English

The biggest machine ever built, the Large Hadron Collider was designed to recreate the moments after the Big Bang, thus explaining the origin of matter (the 'God Particle'). In this immensely enjoyable documentary, former physicist Mark Levinson takes us inside the moment of truth: when the switch is thrown for the first time. Particle physicists have rarely been so compelling – or funny.

##### PULP

Director: Florian Habicht | UK | 90 mins | In English

It's the day of Pulp's last UK concert in their hometown of Sheffield, and all across the city fans are ready for a big night. New Zealander Florian Habicht's loving portrait of this iconic Britpop band is full of wit and warmth, and when gangly, charismatic genius Jarvis Cocker takes to the stage, and the crowd sings 'Common People', you'll want to join in!

##### THE REDFERN STORY (World Premiere)

Director: Darlene Johnson | Australia | 57 mins | In English

Darlene Johnson's forceful documentary tells the story of the volatile birth of the first all-Indigenous theatre company, the National Black Theatre. Featuring interviews with indigenous media pioneer Lester Bostock, writer Gerry Bostock, actor Lillian Crombie, activist-academic Gary Foley, academic Marcia Langton, actors Rachael Maza, Bryan Brown and Bindi Williams.

The Redfern Story is presented in partnership with Screen Australia's Indigenous Department, the ABC and Vivid Sydney.

##### SEPIDEH: REACHING FOR THE STARS

Director: Berit Madsen | Denmark, Iran, Germany | 91 mins | In English and Farsi with English subtitles

This heart-stirring documentary follows an Iranian teenager who yearns to be an astronaut despite social mores and financial woes. Sepideh hauls her telescope to the dark hills surrounding her rural hometown, trailing gossip in her wake – good Iranian girls don't go out after dark. Filmed over several years, this is compelling, inspiring viewing.

##### UKRAINE IS NOT A BROTHEL

Director: Kitty Green | Australia | 80 mins | In English, Ukrainian and Russian with English subtitles

Australian filmmaker Kitty Green's fascinating documentary follows the members of FEMEN, the infamously topless female protestors of Ukraine – naked warriors against patriarchy. Such defiance has a price: the women tell of their horrific treatment at the hands of the authorities. The disturbing question, however, is just who controls their campaign?

##### THE UNKNOWN KNOWN

Director: Errol Morris | USA | 96 mins | In English

Oscar winner Errol Morris puts former US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld in front of his penetrating lens, quizzing him on the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, his relationship with George H.W. Bush, and his years in office. Rumsfeld takes it all in his stride, and Morris' patient, insistent

probing makes for fascinating viewing.

#### WATERMARK

Directors: Jennifer Baichwal, Edward Burtynsky | Canada | 92 mins | In Mandarin, English, Bengali, Hindi and Spanish with English subtitles  
Filmmaker Jennifer Baichwal and environmental photographer Edward Burtynsky (Manufactured Landscapes) reunite to document humanity's relationship with water. Stunning aerial footage – filmed over three years – of the rapid shrinking of immense natural waterways is interspersed with firsthand accounts that tell of our use and misuse of this vital resource.

#### ALTMAN RETRO

##### ALTMAN ON ALTMAN

When Robert Altman was granted an honorary Oscar for lifetime achievement at the 2006 Academy Awards eight months before his passing, Meryl Streep and Lily Tomlin introduced him as “a man who didn't play by the rules or stick to the script.” Presented at SFF 2014 by Altman's eldest son, Michael Altman, this selection of classics – both the hits and lesser-known titles – celebrates his idiosyncratic career and cinematic genius.

##### THAT COLD DAY IN THE PARK

Director: Robert Altman | USA | 1969 | 113 mins | In English

This early offering is the first and certainly one of the darkest and most disturbing psychological thrillers in the Altman collection, evidencing his honed skills and experience from years of television direction and the influence of Alfred Hitchcock.

##### M\*A\*S\*H

Director: Robert Altman | USA | 1970 | 116 mins | In English

This iconic, irreverent Korean War-set black comedy lit the spotlight on the 50-year feature-film career of Robert Altman as well as its brilliant ensemble cast, including Elliott Gould, Donald Sutherland and Robert Duvall.

##### McCABE & MRS MILLER

Director: Robert Altman | USA | 1971 | 120 mins | In English

This classic homage to the western features stellar performances from Warren Beatty and Julie Christie in the title roles, stunning Canadian locations and poignant music from Leonard Cohen.

##### NASHVILLE

Director: Robert Altman | USA | 1975 | 157 mins | In English

A clever romp through the iconic country-music capital, this mockudrama is an unforgettable tapestry of flawed people and troubled lives. Ned Beatty, Lily Tomlin and Keith Carradine lead the brilliant ensemble.

##### 3 WOMEN

Director: Robert Altman | USA | 1977 | 124 mins | In English

Sissy Spacek, Shelly Duvall and Janice Rule star in this surreal, twisted psychological study of the bizarre relationship between three apparently ordinary women in an isolated desert community.

##### A WEDDING

Director: Robert Altman | USA | 1978 | 125 mins | In English

One of the best examples of the 'Altmanesque' style, this 24-character tragic comedy runs several simultaneous plot lines with flawless mastery. Lillian Gish, Carol Burnett, Desi Arnaz Jr. and Mia Farrow are among the stars.

##### SHORT CUTS

Director: Robert Altman | USA | 1993 | 187 mins | In English

This ensemble stew of vignettes overlaps and intersects well over half a dozen relationships. The all-star cast includes Lily Tomlin, Robert Downey Jr., Jennifer Jason Leigh, Tom Waits and Julianne Moore.

##### A PRAIRIE HOME COMPANION

Director: Robert Altman | USA | 2006 | 105 mins | In English

Meryl Streep, Lily Tomlin, Kevin Kline, Woody Harrelson, Lindsay Lohan and John C. Reilly are among the stars of Robert Altman's swan song, set behind the scenes of Garrison Keillor's beloved radio show.